

## **A Reader's Guide for *The Narrow Gate***

1. *The Narrow Gate* looks at parents who favor one child over another and how that affects the emotional growth of the child and his/her ability to love, accept, and forgive others. Do you relate to the experiences of Emil and Jules or Emil and Elise? In what way?
2. What does Eugenie, as a narrator and grandmother to the other two narrators, bring to the story? How would the novel be different if told from Jules or Emil's perspective?
3. Although Elise is very capable of love, she is not as capable of forgiveness. What elements of Elise's personality do you think were ultimately her downfall? Was it primarily the fault of her parents and family or Elise that things turned out the way they did for her?
4. The novel is set in a small town in rural Southwestern Pennsylvania. Have you ever lived in a small town? What are the similarities and differences you see between your experience and that of living in McDonald?
5. Did your impressions of Noelle and of Emil as people and parents change from the beginning of the book to the end?
6. Jules and Eugenie Delcroix are immigrants to the United States. Their children are first generation Americans. Do you have newly immigrated family member or friends? Do you see in any of them the struggles Jules has to acclimate to a new society while clinging to the cultural norms he grew up with?
7. Issues of racial intolerance and religious intolerance as well as acceptance are played out through many of the characters in this book. What has been your experience and which characters were either recognizable or perhaps relatable to you based on that experience?

8. The Delcroix are Belgians from the Wallonia, a French speaking region of Belgium. Did you know much about Belgium before reading this novel? Did you know where Belgians emigrated to in the US or that one of the areas happened to be Western Pennsylvania?

9. Ralphie Scruggs has all the classic issues of the “bad” friend in this novel. Did you think he was a bad or good friend to Elise? Do you think Ralphie had any effect on the decisions Elise made, bad or good?

10. At its core, what do you think this novel is about? Love, forgiveness, revenge, hope?